



## Book review

### **Kidnapping, an Investigator's Guide, Diana M. Concannon**

This is an attractive, good quality, hardback that would look appealing on the bookshelf. The majority of chapters are devoted to a specific category of kidnapping with individual allocations to domestic, predatory (adult and children have separate chapters) profit, revenge, staged and political kidnapping.

Each chapter is well structured and follows the same layout. There is some repetition, with similar information presented in different formats to illustrate the features of each class of perpetrator. I particularly liked the use of case histories to demonstrate each category including the basis for case law and the development of legislation. However by the final chapters this format became a little tedious. The appendices contained the same information again.

The author gives an over view of USA laws relating to kidnapping, including case law and subsequent legislation. This was interesting but of different jurisdiction to the four nations of the UK. There were some important discussion points regarding the differences of approach between the USA and the UK. An example of this is Megan's Law, which allows the address of sex offenders to be publically available in the USA. I am aware this is similar to the sex offender disclosure scheme (Sarah's Law) in the UK introduced after the campaign by Sarah's mother Sara Payne. Another example is the USA Amber Alert initiative, for missing people under the age of 21; a modified version has now been adopted by the UK.

A discussion about the testing of a victim's account to determine validity, using criteria based content analysis, stated that a truthful account contains details from all five senses. There was reference to the use of the polygraph as permissible evidence in the USA,

although the limitations the polygraph as an investigators tool was discussed by the author.

Consideration was given to prevention of abduction with an emphasis on the importance of education in the community for all age groups of awareness of the risks, with the need for acting out scenarios. When a child is kidnapped the victim is usually chosen at random and is an opportunistic event. This reinforces the importance of 'Stranger Danger' awareness and the need for children to act out scenarios, also highlighting how the internet is frequently used to identify and contact a victim.

This book is true to its title and is aimed at investigators. It provides a possible start for basic offender profiling to identify possible perpetrators of kidnapping and may also appeal to psychologists. It is written for American professionals but the basic knowledge is transferable internationally. I gained a tip to be used when travelling by air, to choose my route with care and select a window seat furthest away from the cockpit, exits and toilets!

Would I buy it? Probably not as a forensic physician who deals predominantly with victims, since the focus is on the perpetrator not the abducted individual. It is still interesting background reading, though maybe this is a book to borrow from the library.

Linda Teebay  
Forensic Lead & Forensic Examiner (SOM), Alder Hey NHS FT,  
Liverpool, UK

E-mail addresses: [linda.teebay@alderhey.nhs.uk](mailto:linda.teebay@alderhey.nhs.uk),  
[teebay@btopenworld.com](mailto:teebay@btopenworld.com).

Available online 28 August 2014